

# Swedish Extremist Disrupts Societal Serenity by Insulting Muslims

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## Report Diplomatic pressure mounts on Tel Aviv as Jordan calls for expulsion of Israeli ambassador

TEHRAN— As the Israeli regime's mercenaries are increasing pressure on the Palestinian worshippers who are on fast in the holy month of Ramadan, public opinion has risen against the usurpers of the holy Quds.

Diplomatic pressure is also mounting on the Israeli regime, as the Jordanian parliament issued an official appeal to the government on April 18 to expel the Israeli ambassador in Amman, in response to Tel Aviv's attacks on Palestinian pilgrims at Al-Aqsa Mosque.

According to the state news agency Petra, the council agreed to present to the government a legislative memorandum signed by 87 legislators, which contained a demand for the Israeli ambassador to be expelled.

Jordan's Foreign Minister, Ayman Safadi, stated that the government will summon the charge d'affaires of the Israeli embassy in Amman to protest the crimes at Al-Aqsa Mosque.

During the parliament session, Safadi stated that Amman would hold an Arab League committee meeting on Thursday to discuss the Israeli attacks.

The foreign minister also reiterated Jordan's commitment to fight all attempts to change Jerusalem's legal and historical status quo.

Following further attacks that left numerous Palestinians injured, King Abdullah called on Israel to "stop illegal and provocative acts" on Al-Aqsa Mosque on Sunday and requested increased international pressure.

He also stated that Israel must preserve the sanctity of Al-Aqsa and support the basic rights of the Palestinian people, and that Jordan will continue to prioritize the protection of Jerusalem and its holy places.

Under the protection of Israeli occupation troops, extreme Jewish settlers stormed Al-Aqsa Mosque early on Sunday and aggressively attacked on defenseless Palestinian worshippers. ► Page 2

## Report Dragan Skocic will coach Iran in 2022 World Cup

TEHRAN – Mirshad Majedi, acting president of Iran football federation, said that Dragan Skocic will coach Team Melli in the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

There have been speculations that the football federation is going to change the Croatian coach but Majedi said Skocic will remain the head coach in the World Cup.

"Logically, it's not good time to change the coach. Under leading of him, Iran have qualified for the 2022 World Cup as winners and I think he is the best option to head Iran in Doha," Majedi said in an interview with Football Barta in state-run Iran TV.

Iran have been drawn in Group B along with England, the U.S. and either Ukraine, Wales or Scotland.

The team want to end a qualification drought for the first time but Majedi says that they face financial challenges to prepare Team Melli for the competition. ► Page 3

## Annual oil industry revenues top \$43b

TEHRAN – Iranian Oil Minister Javad Oji said the oil industry has brought the country over \$43 billion of revenues in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20), Shana reported on Tuesday.

Oji made the remarks at a ceremony for signing a cooperation memorandum of understanding (MOU) between Oil Ministry and Tehran Municipality.

Based on the MOU, the two sides are going to cooperate in proposing innovative and knowledge-based solutions for managing and reducing fuel consumption in the transportation sector.

Speaking at the mentioned ceremony, Oji said if the country's fuel consumption is halved

the revenues in this sector can be increased even to \$150 billion a year.

According to the minister, nowadays the country's gasoline and diesel refining capacity is close to the demand and consumption, so considering the upward trend of the demand for fuel, the investment capacity in this industry is increasing every day.

The official also put the country's total natural gas production in the previous year at 850 million cubic meters, saying that due to high energy consumption, the country faced a deficit of 250 million cubic meters and therefore gas supply to industries was limited.

"Over \$80 billion must be invested in the

gas industry over eight years to increase the country's production capacity to 1.4 billion cubic meters," Oji said.

Mentioning some of the reasons for high gas consumption in the country, the minister said: "Many industries do not have optimal fuel consumption and their added value is low. The average efficiency of power plants in the country is 37 percent, while the average figure is about 48 percent in the world."

He further put the country's current gasoline consumption at 95 million liters per day, saying: "The price of gasoline in the world has now reached 90 cents per liter, so by saving more fuel and increasing exports, a large income will be made for the country." ► Page 4

## Iran grieves for Afghan schoolchildren killed in terrorist attack

TEHRAN – Iranian government spokesman Ali Bahadori Jahromi on Tuesday censured bomb attacks against schoolchildren in Kabul, Afghanistan, calling the move another criminal act by terrorists.

"Targeting innocent children in the holy month of Ramadan once again showed the reality of criminal terrorists," Bahadori Jahromi tweeted.

He added, "The grief of the martyrdom and injury of tens of Afghan students in the holy month of Ramadan is indescribable."

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh also asked responsible officials in Afghanistan to "identify" and "punish" those who committed this heinous act.

Writing on his Twitter account, Khatibzadeh said "the black-hearted Takfiris once against committed crimes" and shed the blood of Afghan children.

He said these "anti-religion" people even did not observe the "reverence of the fasting month of Ramadan".

At least six people including students have been killed and 11 others wounded after two blasts targeted a boys' school in Kabul's Dasht-e-Barchi neighborhood, a Kabul police spokesman has said. ► Page 2

## Persian literati to celebrate Sadi Day in international webinar

TEHRAN – Persian literati will come together on Wednesday in an international webinar to celebrate Sadi, one of the giants of classic Persian poetry and literature.

The Iranian Society of Cultural Works and Luminaries will organize the event with contributions from the Embassy of Iran in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, one day earlier than what is registered on the Iranian calendar.

Although this year's Sadi Day falls on Thursday, the organizers gave no comment on why the webinar will be held one day earlier.

The webinar will start at 4 pm with a speech by Iranian Society of Cultural Works and Luminaries director Hassan Bolkhari.

Sadi Foundation director Gholam-Ali Haddad-Adel, who is also in charge of the Academy of Persian Language and Literature, will deliver a lecture.

Sharif Morod Esrofil of the Tajik State Pedagogical University, Tajik Sadi expert Obid Shakurzoda and their compatriot artist Ortiq Qodirov will attend the webinar.

Pakistani Persian literature scholar Syed Najmi Hasan Zaidi and Kambarbekova Galiya Amzeevna, head of the Iranian Studies Department at the Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, will also deliver lectures. ► Page 8

## WHO holds workshop in Iran on risk communication

TEHRAN – The World Health Organization (WHO) in Iran has stepped up support to the country in building capacity to implement International Health Regulations (IHR) by conducting a 2-day workshop on risk communication and community engagement, with an emphasis on the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The workshop, planned as part of a 2-week mission to the country, aimed at enhancing national emergency preparedness and response to health crises, and was facilitated by Rose Aynsley, WHO consultant on RCCE from the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean.

Held virtually at the WHO country office in

Tehran on March 2–3, the training targeted 90 professionals from the Ministry of Health and Medical Education and universities of medical sciences, including public health experts, physicians, laboratory technicians, health workers, and public relations experts from all 31 provinces across the country.

In recognition of the need for a robust RCCE mechanism and structure, the Ministry expressed enthusiasm to endorse the training as support to the development of a national RCCE strategy and work plan, which would mark a critical milestone in improving IHR core capacities in the country. ► Page 7

## 3m relics freezing at National Museum treasure vault

TEHRAN – Some three million historical objects are being kept at the treasure vault of the National Museum of Iran, the Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Minister said on Monday.

"Due to a lack of adequate space, three million relics are currently stored in the museum's treasure vault, but only 350,000 have been documented and registered," Ezzatollah

Zarghami said during a visit to the prestigious museum.

The treasure trove contains valuable treasures that could be displayed in an independent specialized museum, he noted.

Currently, some 3200 valuable historical pieces are on display in the museum, the minister added. ► Page 6

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## Ukraine says "Battle of Donbass" has started

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky says a large-scale military operation by the Russian military in the country's east has started.

Zelensky says Russian forces had begun the "Battle of Donbass" after senior officials said Moscow had begun a new offensive push along most of Ukraine's eastern flank.

"We can now confirm that Russian troops have begun the battle for the Donbass, which they have been preparing for a long time. A large part of the Russian army is now dedicated to this offensive," Zelensky said in a video address, adding: "No matter how many Russian troops they send there, we will fight. We will defend ourselves."

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov confirmed "another stage of this operation is beginning... and I am sure this will be a very important moment of this entire special undertaking"

Ukrainian media reported a series of explosions, some powerful, along the front line in the Donetsk region in Donbass.

Ukrainian officials and local media also say further explosions were heard in Kharkiv, Mykolaiv in the south and Zaporizhzhia in the southeast.

Tehran Times was not immediately able to verify the reports.

The latest developments come as the governor of Lviv, said preliminary reports suggest there have been four strikes in the city, three on warehouses and another on a car service station.

The Russian defense ministry says the country's air forces have carried out air strikes at a logistics

center of the Ukrainian army near the city of Lviv and destroyed a large number of foreign-made weapons stored there.

The Russian forces have also destroyed a repair center for Tochka U ballistic missiles in the city of Dnipro, the ministry says.

Local authorities say Russian troops captured the eastern Ukraine town of Kreminna, as Kyiv's armed forces launched salvos on Russian forces in the nearby settlement of Rubizhne. Kreminna is said to be a strategic target for Moscow.

Rubizhne, which is under control from Russian forces, was under intense fire from Ukrainian artillery and mortars, journalists reported.

Powerful explosions could be seen in Rubizhne, sometimes followed by fires and plumes of white or black smoke.

Russian forces do appear to have stepped up their operation to capture the eastern Donbas region having pulled back troops deployed around the capital Kyiv.

Russia's defense ministry also says it had hit hundreds of military targets in Ukraine. It says air-launched missiles had destroyed 16 military facilities across Ukraine.

It added that the Russian air force had launched strikes against 108 areas where Ukrainian forces were concentrated and Russian artillery struck 315 Ukrainian military targets.

A senior Pentagon official says the first shipments of a new U.S. military aid package have arrived at Ukraine's borders to be handed over in its fight against the Russian military, ► Page 5



## Tulips garden in Tehran

A tulips garden measuring 3 hectares in area in northern Tehran is hosting people who seek to get rid of air pollution and enjoy beauty and serenity of nature.



## Iran grieves for Afghan schoolchildren killed in terrorist attack



From page 1 ► Khalid Zadran told AFP news agency on Tuesday that two improvised explosive devices (IEDs) blew up outside the Abdul Rahim Shahid high school in western Kabul.

Zadran said a third blast had occurred at an English language center several kilometers away but in the same area. He did not specify whether it was caused by an explosive. There were no immediate reports of casualties from there.

He had earlier tweeted that three blasts had rocked the school, which is in an area mainly inhabited by the Shia Hazara community – an ethnic and religious minority frequently targeted by ISIL (ISIS) attacks in the past.

Tuesday's explosions occurred as students were coming out of their morning classes at the school, which can house up to 1,000 students, witnesses told the AFP. It was not immediately clear how many children were in the school at the time of the explosions.

The blasts, which occurred in rapid succession, were being investigated and more casualties were feared, according to the Zadran and Kabul's Emergency Hospital. Several of the wounded were in a critical condition.

The head of a hospital nursing department, who declined to be named, told Reuters news agency at least four people were killed and 14 wounded in the blasts.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack, which followed a lull in violence over the cold winter months and after foreign forces withdrew last year.

Afghanistan's Taliban rulers say they have secured the country since taking power in August, but international officials and analysts say the risk of a rebellion remains.

## Leader's advisor to Haniyeh: You are role model for Muslim world

TEHRAN – Ali Akbar Velayati, the top adviser to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has praised recent achievements of Palestinian resistance groups, underlining Iran's solidarity with the Palestinian people.

Velayati made the remarks in a phone conversation on Sunday with Ismail Haniyeh, the chief of the Hamas political bureau.

"You are a role model for the Muslim world. We follow your great victories and achievements and what you do is a cause of honor for the resistance," Velayati remarked.

Iran, according to Haniyeh, is a key support base for the Palestinian people and resistance.

"Our people and resistance are in good shape and we will continue to defend Al-Aqsa," Haniyeh added.

The phone conversation happened as Israel's brutal attacks on Palestinians and holy sites in the occupied territories, particularly the Al-Aqsa Mosque in East Al-Quds, have escalated.

Since the start of Ramadan, Israeli violence has been on the rise in the occupied West Bank, with over two dozen Palestinians dead and many more injured at the hands of the regime's army.

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett gave Israeli soldiers unrestricted freedom

Many of the attacks in the past several months have been claimed by ISIL.

In May last year at least 85 people – mainly female students – were killed and about 300 were wounded when three bombs exploded near their school in Dasht-e-Barchi.

A former Iranian diplomat has said the blasts in Kabul are another proof that the Taliban is incapable of stabilizing Afghanistan.

"This event showed once again that the Taliban is not competent to manage and rule Afghanistan," Abolfazl Zohrevand, Iran's former ambassador to Afghanistan, told ISNA.

Zohrevand said the least thing that a ruling system must do is to protect people's lives but Taliban not only has failed to provide "legal security" for Afghan citizens it has also failed to protect people's lives."

He added that the Taliban will likely finger the point at Daesh (ISIL), al-Qaeda or other Takfiri groups for this terrorist act but the reality is that the Taliban itself is not a "united" and it includes extremist persons ranging from Salafists to al-Qaeda loyalists.

The former ambassador said the government of Ashraf Ghani, which was pro-West, failed to secure Afghanistan let alone Taliban which is not recognized by the international community and many Afghan citizens do not agree with its views and are "complaining" of its approach.

He said if one looks at the explosions which have happened recently in Kabul one finds out that the those who carry out such operations are "all anti-Shia and Hazara".

The former diplomat added, "We are currently noticing political, economic and security collapse in Afghanistan."

of action earlier this month to continue their harsh operations against Palestinians, signaling an increase in Israeli murder and harassment of Palestinians.

At least 19 Palestinians were hurt in conflicts on Sunday at the Al-Aqsa Mosque complex in the occupied Al-Quds, when Israeli settlers invaded the historic site under the cover of Israeli armed troops.

Israeli police expanded their violence inside Al-Aqsa Mosque on Friday morning, storming the mosque's courtyards and attacked worshippers. Over 150 Palestinians were injured and 400 others detained in the raid.

Similar acts sparked a battle between the Israeli military and the Gaza-based resistance organizations in May, who rose up in protest to Israeli assault.

Jamal Nazzal, the spokesman for the Palestine National Liberation Movement (Fatah), said in a press release on Sunday that Israel has been preparing for the assault on Al-Aqsa Mosque for a long time.

He stated that Israel's brutality against Palestinians in Al-Quds is likely to destabilize the entire region and beyond, adding that "Israel's violent actions against our civilians are part of a plan and not a reaction to anything Palestinians were doing in the early morning of last Friday."

# Diplomatic pressure mounts on Tel Aviv as Jordan calls for expulsion of Israeli ambassador

From page 1 ► Israeli troops barred settlers from entering the area during the previous raid on the Islamic holy site on Friday. Some settlers brought animals to execute provocative ceremonial sacrifices, which Israeli authorities thought would elicit a military reaction from the Palestinian resistance.

Meanwhile, according to a UN official who spoke to the media on the condition of anonymity, the UN Security Council was scheduled to hold an emergency closed-door session on Tuesday to discuss recent aggressions of the Israelis in al-Quds (Jerusalem).

The meeting comes as the Israeli aggressions in the region have risen, with three days of severe skirmishes on the Temple Mount between Palestinian fighters and Israeli police stoking worries of a larger conflagration.

France, China, Ireland, Norway, and the United Arab Emirates requested the Security Council meeting, according to the UN official.

According to the UN diplomat, neither the Israeli nor Palestinian envoys will be called to the conference, nor would a draft resolution on the situation be debated or submitted.

Israel's tactics on the Temple Mount to suppress the Palestinians, including police entering the mosque, arresting hundreds,

and using tear gas and rubber bullets, have been condemned internationally, even by so-called allies Jordan and the United Arab Emirates, whose leaders spoke by phone Monday.

"The UAE strongly condemned today Israeli forces' storming of Al-Aqsa Mosque, which resulted in the injury of a number of civilians," the country's Foreign Ministry said in a statement Friday, adding that it "underscored the need for self-restraint and protection for worshippers."

According to official media in Amman, Jordan's King discussed "regional and international measures to stop the hazardous Israeli escalation" with the leaders of the UAE, Egypt, and other Arab governments, as well as UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres and European Council president Charles Michel.

However, in a video statement released Monday evening, the Israeli regime's Prime Minister Naftali Bennett raged that Israel was being blamed for the violence perpetrated against it!

"There are those who are encouraging rock-throwing and the use of violence against the citizens of the State of Israel," he said, adding, "This is a reward for the inciters, especially Hamas, which are trying to ignite violence in Jerusalem."

## IRGC chief: Army-IRGC unity has disappointed and angered foes

TEHRAN- In a congratulatory message to Army Commander Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi on Sunday, the chief of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Hossein Salami praised the "unity" and "empathy" between the Army and the IRGC, saying such a spirit has "disappointed and angered" the enemies of the Islamic Republic.

Army Day is held every year on Farvardin 29, which fell on April 18 this year.

Major General Salami also said Iran's enemies, particularly the United States and the Zionist regime, are afraid to take military adventure against Iran because of the Army's invincible might.

"There is no doubt that the enemies' front, particularly the Zionist regime and the United States and its wicked regional and extra-regional allies, do not dare think or even dream of making any attacks against the Islamic Iran due to its Army's advanced and deterrent strength," he

noted.

General Salami emphasized that the Army's power was the result of a long history of sacrifices made to protect the country's independence, territorial integrity, and national interest in the 44 years since the inception of Islamic Revolution, particularly during the eight years of the Sacred Defense (a term used to refer to Saddam Hussein's eight years of imposed war against Iran in the 1980s).

He went on to say that the Iranian Army's outstanding bravery throughout the Iraqi-imposed war was evidenced by the Army's efforts, technologically sophisticated defensive and military capabilities, and clever deterrence against any threats.

In a glorious military parade on Monday, Army infantry and armored troops, airborne helicopters, air force fighters, air defense weaponry, defensive systems, and navy equipment mounted on military vehicles marched

in front of a platform where key government and military leaders watched the parade.

President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi addressed the ceremony, warning the Zionist regime that any "tiniest" move against Iran's interests would make Israel's "center" a target for the Iranian Armed Forces.

"The message to the Zionist regime is that if you seek to normalize relations with the countries of the region, you should know that your tiniest move is not hidden from the eyes of our armed forces and our intelligence and security forces," Raisi pointed out.

The military parade was held in southern Tehran near the mausoleum of Imam Khomeini, the Islamic Republic's founder.

"Just know that if the slightest move on your part occurs against our nation, our armed forces will target the center of the Zionist regime, and the power of our armed forces will not leave you at rest," President Raisi added.

## Taliban vow to safeguard Iran's diplomatic missions

TEHRAN- Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian has stated that Tehran has a good and constructive perspective of Afghanistan.

Amir Abdollahian made the remarks in a phone conversation late on Monday with Amir Khan Muttaqi, the acting foreign minister of the Taliban governing body.

"The Islamic Republic has a positive and constructive view about Afghanistan," Amir Abdollahian said.

During the phone call, Muttaqi vowed to maintain the security of Iranian diplomatic facilities, diplomats, and personnel in Afghanistan.

After assaults took place against Iran's embassy in Kabul and its consulate general in Herat in western Afghanistan, Muttaqi made the assurance that such incidents would never happen again.

Muttaqi expressed great regret for the events and said that the Taliban would "completely secure the diplomatic facilities, diplomats and staff of the Islamic Republic of Iran in his country."

Last week, videos went viral on social media platforms that some

mobs started throwing stones at the Iranian embassy in Kabul and the consulate general in Herat, causing damage to both facilities.

The Iranian foreign minister chastised Afghan officials for failing to take the required precautions to safeguard the premises' security, which is the host country's obligation.

The attacks, which occurred amid spurious accusations of widespread maltreatment of Afghan migrants in Iran, left no one injured.

Despite sanctions and a slew of other issues, Iran has been sheltering millions of Afghans for decades.

Since the Taliban assumed control of Afghanistan in mid-August, around 300,000 additional refugees have entered Iran, according to estimates.

Muttaqi also expressed gratitude to the Iranian government and people for their hospitality during tough times, emphasizing Kabul's commitment to expanding relations and working with Tehran.

He promised that Afghanistan will do its best to assuage Tehran's concerns about the safety of its



"We expect everyone not to join the lies and certainly not to encourage violence against Jews," Bennett, who thinks everyone is as foolish as him, said.

On Friday, hundreds of Israeli armed troops stormed Al Aqsa Mosque in al-Quds, and attacked worshippers with stun grenades, tear gas, and rubber and metal bullets.

The outbreak of violence began when Israeli forces broke into the holy mosque of Al Aqsa and started firing on the worshippers, which resulted in more than 150 injuries among them. The Palestinian Red Crescent in al-Quds reported that its teams dealt with 153 injuries in the confrontations that took place inside the courtyards of the holy Al-Aqsa Mosque.

The Palestinian organization said a number of attacks on its crews were recorded, including impeding access to the injured, direct attacks on them, and attacking ambulances.

This has caused the Muslims around the world to hold this year's Quds Day ceremony in the noblest way.

According to media reports, massive preparations are being made in Beirut for International Quds Day. Also, reports indicate that some Palestinian leaders are going to visit Lebanon and undertake consultative meetings to coordinate the Quds Day rallies, as reported by

the Lebanese paper Rai Al-Youm.

"International Al-Quds Day commemoration activities, which coincide with the last Friday of the holy month of Ramadan every year, had been lowered by October 17, 2019 in Lebanon due to the coronavirus outbreak and the political and social conditions in which the country was struggling with," the newspaper said.

"However, this year's preparations appear to be different, with all Lebanese and Palestinian national forces mobilized to turn this day into an opportunity to increase public presence and achieve the greatest solidarity with the Palestinian people, al-Quds, and the guardians of the Holy Shrine," the paper wrote.

This Ramadan, the whole world expects a different Quds Day, as the violent aggressions of the Zionists have increased.

The rise of Palestinian popular resistance in the West Bank is another factor that would make this year's festivities special.

According to a well-informed source, Hezbollah Secretary General Seyed Hassan Nasrallah called for extensive public participation this year in commemorating Quds Day and planned a large-scale popular festival on the southern outskirts of Beirut on the last Friday of Ramadan. He will also give a speech about the situation in occupied Palestine, the source added.

diplomatic missions.

"Millions of Afghan brothers and sisters" residing in Iran over the past 40 years have always been supplied with basic commodities, Amir Abdollahian stated.

The senior Iranian diplomat addressed a surge of "malicious, calculated and false propaganda" on various social media platforms, asserting that it is pushed by "enemies and opponents of good relations between the two neighboring countries of Iran and Afghanistan."

Amir Abdollahian went on to say that Iran has exchanged delegations for bilateral cooperation, sent humanitarian supplies, and kept its missions active in delivering services to the people of Afghanistan.

On August 15, the Taliban, who previously controlled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001, retook power and proclaimed the creation of a caretaker government.

Since the withdrawal of the U.S. forces from Afghanistan, the U.S. officials have frozen roughly \$9.5 billion in assets belonging to the Afghan central bank.

The World Bank and the



# Swedish extremist disrupts societal serenity by insulting Muslims

TEHRAN – Hundreds of millions of Muslims across the globe took umbrage at a leader of a far-right group in Sweden for violating the sanctity of the holy Quran.

A Swedish reactionary politician has disrupted societal peace in Sweden by taking the sacrilegious step of burning the holy Quran, a book deeply venerated and cherished by all Muslims in the world.

The politician, Rasmus Paludan, who is the leader of a far-right group in the city of Linköping, set the holy book on fire seemingly to show objection to his country's immigration policy. The move, which was apparently intended to incite violence by the Swedish Muslim community with the aim of demonizing them, entangled Sweden in a diplomatic crisis with the Muslim world.

The sacrilegious move was strongly condemned by Muslim countries such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, and Qatar to name a few. Protests were held in a number of Muslim countries such as Malaysia, Jordan, Iraq, Iran, etc.

Muslim users on social media platforms also strongly denounced the move, with some of them even



calling for a boycott of Swedish products.

What made the disgusting move even more disgusting is that Paludan perpetrated his sacrilegious act under the protection of the Swedish police under the flimsy argument of protecting freedom of expression.

But the argument failed to resonate with Muslims around the world who keep raising the question of how freedom of expression can be used to desecrate the sanctity of sincerely held religious beliefs of more than two billion human beings.

This point was raised during the summoning of the Swedish chargé d'affaires in Tehran. Following Paludan's outrageous move, the Swedish chargé d'affaires was summoned in the absence of the country's ambassador by the director of the Iranian Foreign Ministry's Western Europe Division III.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry official conveyed the Islamic Republic's strong protest to the Swedish diplomat against the sacrilegious move by the foregoing person that was done under the pretext of freedom of speech and

with the support of the Swedish police.

The Iranian official described the defiling of the sanctities of more than two billion Muslims of the world and hurting their feelings as the worst form of abusing freedom of speech, saying this regrettable event that happened under the protection of the Swedish police, tarnished Sweden's image among the world's Muslims.

Of course, Paludan does not represent all Swedish people or society. But the Swedish government certainly has a responsibility in terms of preventing all kinds of hatred in its jurisdiction. If offending two billion people is not hatred, then what else can be considered hatred.

Paludan, who was granted Swedish citizenship in 2020, is known for his hostility to Islam, and he had called for "Denmark being free of Muslims" before the Danish elections in 2019, but he failed to win a seat in Parliament.

Sweden has a genuine interest in preventing further defiling of Muslim sanctities as the repetition of such careless moves could endanger coexistence both in Sweden and the world.

## Sweden morphing into prison for Muslims: human rights chief

TEHRAN – A senior Iranian human rights official has condemned sacrilege to the Holy Quran in Sweden, saying the country in turning into a prison for Muslims.

The official, Kazem Gharibabadi, who is Vice-President of the Judiciary for International Affairs and Secretary General of Iran's High Council for Human Rights, said religious intolerance is spreading across Europe.

"Sacrilege to religious sanctities is under no circumstances whatsoever acceptable. Religious intolerance is raging across Europe; and now, Sweden is morphing into a prison for Muslims with the support of the government," Gharibabadi said on Twitter.

The tweet came after a Danish-Swedish extremist burned the Holy Quran which enraged Muslims all over the world.

"Seems they've missed Medieval Inquisition!" Gharibabadi quipped.

On Wednesday afternoon, a number of Iranian university students gathered in front of the Swedish embassy in Tehran to protest against the violation of the sanctity of the Quran.

The student assembly began with the recitation of verses from the holy Quran, and the assembled students called for the prosecution of those involved in burning the holy book in Sweden.

University students participating in the gathering carried several placards denouncing the sacrilege, some of which read: "The Prophet and the Quran are red lines."

Also, the Cultural Committee of the Iranian parliament condemned, in a statement issued Monday, the insult to the Quran in Sweden.

"In today's seemingly civilized world, there are now and then indications of the stinking and unclean interior of the wicked. And this is not the first time that the scene of burning the Holy Quran in the heart of Europe and the repetition of the previous insults to Prophet Muhammad al-Mustafa (may God bless him and his family) appeared under the pretext of freedom of expression," the statement said.

## Iran issued warning to Israel through European intermediaries: report

TEHRAN – A Western source claimed that the Islamic Republic of Iran sent a warning message to Israel through European intermediaries about the bank of targets that could be targeted inside Israel.

Fars News Agency indicated that following the recent warnings by various military and civilian officials in the Islamic Republic of Iran, including the Presidency, the Army and the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps, to Israel regarding any adventure that it might commit, Western sources claimed that Israel received a warning message from Iran.

The "Intel Sky" account on Twitter – which specializes in international risk analysis, monitoring international

aviation and news on various crises – claimed that Iran sent a warning message to the Israel through intermediaries about the bank of targets that can be targeted within Israel.

"Iran has sent to Israel, through European intermediaries, pictures/locations of all its biological, chemical and nuclear weapons storages that will be struck at the first military clash," Intel Sky said on Twitter.

No details were available about this allegation, and no Iranian or Israeli official commented on this piece of news.

The news came after Iranian President Ayatollah Seyed Ebrahim Raisi on Monday issued a strong warning against any Israeli move to

harm Iran. President Raisi made the remarks during a military parade held on the occasion of Army Day. Flanked by Army generals in an elevated stand, Raisi told parading troops that Iran will respond to any Israeli aggression against Iran in Israel's depth.

Underlining that Iran will never start a war, but will face any aggression with a remorseful and decisive response, President Raisi announced the high readiness of the country's military forces and the high intelligence elite of these forces in the face of regional and international developments.

He asserted that the slightest movement of the enemy will not be hidden from the sharp eyes of

Iran's armed forces, noting, "The Zionist regime [Israel] that is seeking to normalize relations with some regional countries must now that the slightest move it makes will not be hidden from the sharp eyes and intelligence of the Armed Forces and intelligent forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran."

Stressing that any movement of the Zionist regime against Iran will lead to a decisive response from the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ayatollah Raisi warned the leaders of the regime, "Beware that the great and formidable power of the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran will not leave you as you are for a second."

Sweden's police," Khatibzadeh said.

The Foreign Ministry spokesman said the intentional repetition of this insulting move in the holy month of Ramadan hurts the feelings of Muslims in Sweden and across the world.

"This act of disrespect is a clear instance of hate mongering and is in violation of freedom of speech and must be condemned by all those who believe in coexistence and dialogue among religions," he added.

"While we hold the Swedish government accountable, we are waiting for the immediate, strong and clear reaction of this country against the perpetrators of this insulting act and transparent and practical steps to prevent such moves from being repeated," he said.

Following the recent events in Sweden that included the burning of Quran by Rasmus Paludan, the leader of a far-right group in the city of Linköping, the Swedish chargé d'affaires was summoned, in the absence of the country's ambassador, by the director of the Iranian Foreign Ministry's Western Europe Division III.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry official conveyed the Islamic Republic's strong protest to the Swedish diplomat against the sacrilegious move by the foregoing person that was done under the pretext of freedom of speech and with the support of the Swedish police.

The director of Western Europe Division III of the Iranian Foreign Ministry condemned this blasphemous move during the holy month of Ramadan and reminded the Swedish government of its responsibility. The Iranian diplomat also called for immediate and decisive action by the Swedish government to end any desecration of the Holy Quran and give assurances that similar events will not take place in the future.

He described the defiling of the sanctities of more than two billion Muslims of the world and hurting their feelings as the worst form of abusing freedom of speech, saying this regrettable event that happened under the protection of the Swedish police, tarnished Sweden's image among the world Muslims.

## SPORTS

### Dragan Skocic will coach Iran in 2022 World Cup

From Page 1 ▶ "Almost 12 million euros of our assets in FIFA have been blocked due to oppressive sanctions. FIFA President Gianni Infantino is eager to help us but there are some difficulties to lift ban," he added.

Majedi also said Skocic will be Iran coach in the 2023 AFC Asian Cup but it doesn't seem logical because the new president of the federation will make a decision after the 2022 World Cup.

Extraordinary assembly of the Football Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) will be held on May 31.

### Iranian Greco-Roman wrestlers win three medals in Asian Championships

TEHRAN – Iranian Greco-Roman wrestlers claimed three medals on Tuesday in the Asian Wrestling Championships underway in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

Naser Ghasem Alizadeh won a gold medal in the 87kg after defeating Jalgasbay Berdimuratov from Uzbekistan 3-1.

Iman Mohammadi also won a bronze medal in the 63kg after withdrawal of Syrian wrestler Ahmad Al Nakdali.

In the 77kg weight class, Aref Habibollahi seized a bronze medal after Kim Hyeonwoo from South Korea pulled out of the third-place match.

The 2022 Asian Wrestling Championships are the 35th edition of Asian Wrestling Championships of combined events, and take place from April 19 to 24 in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

### Dragan Skocic leaves Iran for Croatia

TEHRAN – Iran national football team head coach Dragan Skocic departed Tehran for Zagreb Monday night.

Skocic will return to Iran at the end of May to start the preparation camp for the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

Mirshad Majedi, acting president of Iran football federation, has said the Croatian coach will remain as Team Melli coach in the 2022 World Cup and 2023 AFC Asian Cup.

Iran will hold a training camp in June in Doha, Qatar as part of preparation for the World Cup.

Team Melli has been drawn in Group B along with England, the US and winner of the UEFA playoff between Ukraine, Wales and Scotland.

### Iran to compete at Iraq judo international tournament

TEHRAN – Iran will participate in the Iraq International Judo Tournament.

The event will be held in Baghdad on May 11-12.

Iraq, Iran, Libya, Syria, Morocco, Kuwait, Jordan, Tunisia and Turkey will take part in the tournament.

The teams will also hold a one-week joint training camp after the competition.

Iran will send nine judo players to Iraq.

### Our job is not finished: Javad Nekounam

TEHRAN – Foolad football team head coach Javad Nekounam lauded his charges for securing the second consecutive 2022 AFC

Champions League victory against Ahal on Monday but said the race to the finishing line is far from over.

Foolad edged the Turkmenistan's side 1-0 in Group C and moved up to top of the table.

"I want to congratulate my team and Ahal for being a very good team in this match. They played with five defenders and made it very difficult for us," Nekounam said.

"We controlled the match with our style of play and we fought till the end," he added.

Ayanda Patosi, the scorer of Foolad, says that the win has given them confidence in the competition.

"Ahal pushed us but we fought hard for the three points. It is good to score a goal for my team but the most important thing is to get three points, especially when it was not an easy game," said Patosi.

"This goal and win will give us confidence but we must work hard. It is not over yet and we have a lot of work to do with our coaching staff," added the player of the match.

### Navidkia rues missed Sepahan chances against Al Taawoun

TEHRAN – Sepahan football team head coach Moharram Navidkia believes his side deserved more than a draw, after a 1-1 stalemate against Al Taawoun on Matchday Four of the 2022 AFC Champions League Group D on Monday.

Sumayhan Al Nabit's well taken opener was cancelled out by substitute Shahriyar Moghanlou's strike midway through the second half and Sepahan hit the post twice as the two sides played out an exciting encounter after the group hosts had managed an emphatic 3-0 win four days earlier.

"We deserved to get the three points, not a draw," said Navidkia. "I think we played a very good match against Al Taawoun, especially after the many chances we created during the two halves of the match."

"We were surprised by the goal scored by Al Taawoun at the beginning of the second half which created some chaos in our team. We imposed ourselves and managed to score the equalizer but then missed dangerous chances that could have given us victory," he added.

"During the last training session, we tried to focus on how to end the attacks in the right way. We had a specific plan for this match and I think we were very close to getting the three points. The competition is still going on and we strive to maintain our hopes of qualifying until the last minute. We missed the win as a result of a lack of focus," the Sepahan coach added.

### Vice-president of Iran football federation arrested

TEHRAN – The vice-president of the Iranian Football Federation has been reportedly arrested by Iranian Intelligence Ministry agents in connection with a cryptocurrency scam.

The IRIB News Agency anonymously cited an "informed source" as saying on Saturday that the official had been arrested on suspicion of being linked to the so-called MoneyKing cryptocurrency scam on the same day.

The report didn't name the vice-president, but other sources identified her as Shohreh Mousavi.

IRIB News said the arrested official was the third person to have been taken into custody in relation to the MoneyKing scam, which has defrauded many Iranians of various sums of money.

It identified the two other people only as F. Gh. and the spouse of the Football Federation's vice-president.

There are reportedly over 3,000 plaintiffs in the case, who have collectively lost several thousand billion toman, according to the report.

### Iran FM extends condolences to South Africa on deadly floods

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian has sent a message to South African Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Naledi Pandor, expressing sympathy over the deadly floods in the country.

Amir Abdollahian offered his condolences to the bereaved families, the government of South Africa as well as his counterpart and prayed that patience be bestowed upon the victims' families and those hurt in the

incident, the Iranian Foreign Ministry said in a statement on Tuesday.

Floods in South Africa has left hundreds of people in different areas of the country dead or displaced.



## Annual oil industry revenues top \$43b



From page 1 ► The oil minister expressed hope that with the signing of this memorandum and by using the capacities and capabilities

of knowledge-based companies, energy consumption will be reduced and this will lead to more income for the country.

Cooperation in formulating and implementing standards, national regulations, and comprehensive plans to reduce fuel consumption and environmental pollution, improving energy efficiency indicators in the fields of transportation, construction, and industry, supporting knowledge-based companies and start-ups, and promoting optimal consumption patterns are among the goals covered in the above-mentioned MOU.

## Shasta's new managing director appointed

TEHRAN- Ebrahim Bazian was appointed as the new managing director of Iran's Social Security Investment Company (SSIC), also known by its Persian acronym Shasta, IRNA reported.

Bazian, who was appointed as the acting managing director of SSIC in mid-March, replaced Ali Rostami, the previous head of

Shasta.

The newly appointed manager previously served as the adviser to the head of the Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation, and has managed several industrial companies.

Shasta is the investment arm of Iran's Social Security Organization (SSO).

## 'Removing transport barriers, a prerequisite for boosting Iran-Cuba trade'

TEHRAN - Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Gholam-Hossein Shafeie and Cuban Ambassador to Iran Alberto González Casals have expressed the need for removing transportation barriers as a prerequisite for expanding trade ties.

Speaking in a meeting at the place of ICCIMA, the officials also emphasized the need for establishing direct flights between Tehran and Havana in order to boost economic exchanges, the ICCIMA portal reported on Tuesday.

Referring to the holding of the Iran-Cuba Joint Economic Committee meeting in Tehran next month, Shafeie suggested developing a specific model for promoting economic cooperation between the



ICCIMA Head Gholam-Hossein Shafeie (R) and Cuban Ambassador to Tehran Alberto González Casals

two countries and noted that the two sides should sign a memorandum of understanding at the Joint Committee meeting for economic cooperation based on the mentioned model.

## Export from Kermanshah province increases 15% in a year



TEHRAN- The value of export from Kermanshah province, in the west of Iran, rose 15 percent in the past Iranian calendar year 1400 (ended on March 20), from its preceding year, an official with the customs department of the province announced.

Bakhtiar Rahmanipour said that 525.305 million tons of commodities worth \$2.723 billion were exported from the province in the previous year.

In terms of the weight, the exports also indicate three percent annual growth, he added.

He named ceramics and tiles, rebars, iron products, fruits and vegetables, constructional stones, dairy products, and plastic products as the main exported items.

## TEDPIX gains 11,000 points on Tuesday

TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), gained 11,221 points to 1.513 million on Tuesday.

Over 10.334 billion securities worth 61.478 trillion rials (about \$228 million) were traded at the TSE.

The first market's index rose 7,347 points, and the second market's index climbed 25,288 points.

TEDPIX returned to the level of above 1.5m

points on Monday.

The index rose 9,000 points to 1.454 million in the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday).

As reported, the indices of Iran Khodro Investment Development Company (IKIDO), Social Security Investment Company (SSIC), Iran Khodro Company (IKCO), Saipa Company, and Isfahan Oil Refinery were the mostly followed ones during the past week.

# 'Knowledge-based' strongly supported by Industry, Mining, Trade Ministry

By Mahnaz Abdi

TEHRAN- The current Iranian calendar year 1401 (began on March 21) is named "Production: Knowledge-Based and Job-Creating" by Leader of Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei.

Given the significance of this approach for the country's development, specially under the condition of sanctions, all ministries have already planned to materialize this slogan, among them Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade is one with strong determination to move toward knowledge-based production, which will definitely lead to creation of many jobs as well.

On March 26, Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Fatemi-Amin announced his ministry's support to the knowledge-based products.

Making the remarks on the sidelines of the first cabinet meeting in the new Iranian year, the minister said: "Industries that move toward production of knowledge-based products or industries that create more jobs enjoy the support of the ministry."

The ministry's plans for the realization of the present year's slogan will be in three levels in terms of the knowledge-based and job creation, the minister announced.

"In the first level, we rank, prioritize, target and determine indicators and we monitor. For example, in the export field, we will base the ranking of exporters on knowledge-based factor, that is, exporters who export knowledge-based products will receive higher rankings and points and will be more supported", Fatemi-Amin said.

Industries that move toward production of knowledge-based products or industries that create more jobs are also supported by the ministry, he added.

The second level is dedicated to projects that need to be defined in this area, the minister said, adding, "Fortunately, we set up some infrastructure in the past year that will help the development of the knowledge-based and job creation".

For example, issues such as chain financing and the payment of bill-based facilities solve many working capital issues, he added.

According to him, other issues such as the supply of raw materials through the mercantile exchange are also among these tasks.

Fatemi-Amin described the third level as the processes and structures of the ministry itself, and said, "Last year, with the restructuring of the ministry in all specialized offices such as Office of Automobiles, Textiles and Clothing Office, Office of Medical Equipment and Office of Rail Industries, we created a technology and innovation group that aims to connect the universities to various industries."

TEHRAN - Central Bank of Iran (CBI) will release the list of major defaulters on bank loans by the end of the current Iranian calendar week (Friday), the bank's governor announced.

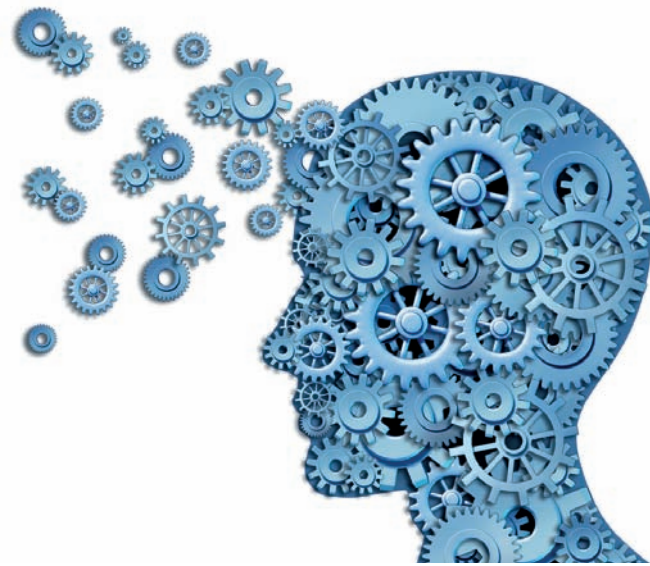
"As we promised before, the list of major defaulters on bank loans will be published in more detail by the end of the week", Ali Saleh-Abadi told IRNA after a meeting with the managing directors of the banks on Monday.

Last week, CBI Public Relations Director Mostafa Qamari-Vafa had announced in a tweet: "The central bank, within the framework of the comprehensive plan to reform the

## Major economic issues explored at TCCIMA board meeting

TEHRAN - The first meeting of the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA)'s Board of Representatives in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 21) was held on Tuesday, during which the attendees discussed major economic issues.

The meeting, which was the 33rd gathering of the TCCIMA board members, was attended



### Industrial estates to be turned into science, technology parks

A main plan of the ministry to materialize the slogan of the year is to turn the industrial estates to science and technology parks.

On March 27, the minister announced that in the near future, industrial estates that have the necessary infrastructure will be turned into science and technology parks in the country.

Making the remarks on the sidelines of a meeting between Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry and Vice-Presidency for Science and Technology, Fatemi-Amin said, "We must move in the direction of stopping sales of raw materials, and producing products that have special complexities."

"There are spaces for knowledge-based work in many industrial estates, but they are more commonly seen for the mass-production spaces. And if Iran's economy is to be knowledge-based, the industrial parks that provide water, land, and electricity must go further and provide more services, such as scientific, legal, and marketing services to the companies", he commented.

Global interaction leads to the production of complex products, that is, products that fewer countries produce and supply, and the sale of raw materials in the world is no longer of special value and does not create credibility, the minister said.

"If we want to have a say in the global and international economy, we should produce more complex export products", he added.

### Export of knowledge-based products prioritized

On April 15, the minister said the exports of knowledge-based products is one of the country's new priorities in setting foreign trade policies for the current year.

"One of our priorities in foreign trade is to export knowledge-based goods instead of raw or semi-raw materials", Fatemi-Amin reiterated.

"This year, considering the slogan of the year which is "Production: Knowledge-Based and Job-Creating", we are completely revising the

criteria for selecting the country's top exporting companies, so that companies exporting knowledge-based goods are given more importance and would be among the top manufacturers", the minister said.

According to the official, so far, knowledge-based industries have been mostly supply-oriented, which means a knowledge-based company worked on a product, process, or service, and the ministry sought to provide a market for it, but now the companies are moving toward becoming demand-oriented.

Large companies in various areas like the automotive, mining, and food industries need to re-define their processes to reduce prices and increase quality, and also implement new processes to move towards research and knowledge-based development, Fatemi-Amin stressed.

The official further mentioned attending a meeting with the representatives of over 30 major companies in which issues, ideas, and challenges in the way of the development of knowledge-based companies have been raised and discussed.

He noted that in case of the knowledge-based development of the country's major industries, small companies can also cooperate with them in their projects, and this will have a great impact on the country's economy.

The minister finally stated that the ministry should encourage competition among production units, adding that major companies can also move toward manufacturing their own needed machinery and equipment as well.

### TPO prioritizes knowledge-based companies

Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), one of the three major subsidiaries of the ministry, has also announced its support to materialize the slogan of the year.

On March 25, TPO Head Alireza Peyman-Pak said that this organization supports the export of knowledge-based and job-creating products.

Referring to the slogan of 1401 by the Leader and the need to strengthen the export of knowledge-based goods, he said: "Since September of last year, with the emphasis of the minister of industry, mining and trade, the role of technology, the role of employment, the amount of investment and the comparative advantage of goods for export were determined and we tried to strengthen the trade of knowledge-based products while maintaining previous export procedures."

Also, in a press conference on Monday, the TPO head said supporting knowledge-based export companies will be among TPO's top priorities in the current year.

"We are trying to shift export incentives to knowledge-based companies in the current year," the official stressed.

### IMIDRO lays ground for mining sector to move toward knowledge-based economy

Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO), the other major subsidiary of the ministry, has also prepared some major plan to materialize the slogan of the year.

On April 17, Vajihollah Jafari, the head of the organization, said that IMIDRO lays the ground for the mining sector to move toward knowledge-based economy and has planned five strategies in this due.

Making the remarks in a meeting on the materialization of knowledge-based economy in the mining sector, the official said IMIDRO is investigating the ways to put the mentioned strategies into action in line with materializing the slogan of year.

These strategies include facilitating and improving the business environment and market of knowledge-based products, developing sustainable employment and completing the value chain based on innovation and new technologies, developing knowledge based on the fourth-generation industrial revolution and smartening, developing specialized knowledge-based companies in mining and mineral industries, and also the development of innovation infrastructure and new technologies in this sector, the official further explained.

The same approach has been also adopted by Industrial Development and Renovation Organization of Iran (IDRO), the third major subsidiary of the ministry.

On April 10, Ali Nabavi, the head of organization, referred to the IDRO's accumulated knowledge and organizational maturity of more than half a century, and considered the supportive and facilitative interaction of this organization with the private sector necessary for the implementation of projects in line with the slogan of the year.

Economic Affairs Minister Ehsan Khandouzi, 11 state-owned banks had already published their list of major defaulters.

Pointing out that this level of transparency has been unprecedented in the country's banking history, the minister said: "The names of companies and real entities who were among the big deadbeats on bank loans have been revealed, and we hope that this will help the banks collect the debts and provide the ground for more creditworthy people, whether producers or ordinary people, to have access to the banking resources."

without oil, the figure was 3.4 percent."

The Statistics Center of Iran (SCI) has also announced different and higher figures of 5.1 percent and 3.8 percent for the economic growth with and without oil, respectively, Khansari said.

Fortunately, these figures show that the country's economy is in a better situation than the previous years, he added.



# Biden’s been consumed by Ukraine, his team wants to bring the focus back home

The rest of the world might not allow it. But Joe Biden wants to return his focus to matters happening at home.

With the war in Ukraine entering its second month and continuing to dominate global headlines, White House allies are expressing concern that voters may see the president as more consumed by international affairs than domestic ones.

The White House itself is keenly aware that voters’ perceptions about the economy are still likely to determine the outcome of November’s midterm elections. And as they warily watch the president’s poor poll numbers, two senior administration officials said a concerted effort is being launched to reemphasize to Americans that the president understands their pain and is trying to help.

In the coming weeks, Biden will travel more inside the country and further stress that Russia’s invasion isn’t some far-off crisis but one with deep economic ramifications in the United States.

“Voters, as sympathetic as they are to Ukraine, are getting a little fatigued,” said Celinda Lake, a veteran Democratic pollster. “And they’re wondering: We’re spending all this money abroad, but what are we spending here at home?”

Lake said it was imperative that the president spend the seven months remaining before the midterms explaining his record and promising to do more. “Half of voters,” she suggested, still don’t know what Biden has accomplished to date.

“They don’t know what’s in the infrastructure package. They don’t know the full extent of the rescue package. They don’t know the executive orders that he’s taken on inflation,” she said, referring to the coronavirus stimulus money sent to states, and the \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure law to rebuild roads, bridges and more.

The scope of Biden’s presidency will be impacted by Democrats’ ability to keep control of at least one, if not both, chambers of Congress this November. And the White House knows it needs to both hammer home Biden’s accomplishments and show Americans it is trying to do more, even at the margins.

The war in Europe will continue to dominate Biden’s time, but aides do not want it to occupy all of his attention. In fact, some of Biden’s advisers believe they only need to look across the Atlantic to find a warning sign of a president perceived to be focused too much on global diplomacy and not enough on domestic pocketbook issues. Many French voters believe that French President Emmanuel Macron prioritized trying to negotiate with Russian President Vladimir Putin and that he neglected domestic issues, leading to tight poll numbers heading into the presidential runoff election later this month.

As it looks to refocus on domestic issues, the White House is eyeing faster, tangible actions to tackle kitchen table issues, namely inflation. This month, Biden issued executive orders allowing the use of an ethanol blend this summer to lower gas prices and to jumpstart a new regulation fixing the Affordable Care Act’s so-called family glitch, which would lower health insurance costs for millions. And late last week, the administration announced plans to resume the sale of leases for oil and gas drilling on federal lands.

Having gone overseas to address the conflict in Ukraine, Biden, for the first time in weeks, boarded Air Force One to promote the steps he’s taken to battle inflation and the economic impact of that war. Last week, he traveled to Iowa to promote an effort to lower gas prices and North Carolina to tout measures to ease supply chain bottlenecks.

He also unveiled a finalized regulation to curb the rise in gun violence across the country, an event that came roughly a week after a mass shooting in Sacramento, Calif., and one day before a man opened fire on a Brooklyn subway, injuring 10. This week, Biden will hit the road again, visiting New Hampshire, Oregon and Washington to highlight new infrastructure projects and cost-saving efforts for families.

He’s also expected to unveil a police reform executive action and take another shot at passing a revamped version of his Build Back Better proposal aimed at combating climate change and cutting health care costs.

Aides want Biden to hit the road to both pitch these ideas and show that he is empathizing with Americans’ struggles. But his tools to actually deal with rising gas and food prices are somewhat limited. And on several other initiatives — including gun control, citizenship



for immigrants brought to the U.S. as children, and voting rights — there seems to be no legislative path forward due to Republican opposition and Democratic resistance to change the legislative filibuster.

The re-emphasis on domestic affairs comes against a sobering backdrop for Biden: His job approval ratings are bad and not improving. The president has received high marks from foreign policy experts, fellow world leaders and even some Republicans for his handling of the war in Europe, and unemployment is at its lowest level in more than 50 years. But inflation, though a global trend, has soured Americans’ views of the economy and his handling of it.

Biden’s poll numbers with critical Democratic base voters are particularly worrisome for party officials. Last month, a Marist poll found only 34 percent of Gen Z and millennial voters approved of Biden’s job performance, and a Marquette Law School poll found that the percent of Black voters who approve of Biden’s handling of the presidency had dropped by 12 points since November.

“A segment of the Democratic base blames Biden for Republican recalcitrance,” said Rep. Emanuel Cleaver (D-Mo.). Black voters have criticized Biden for an inability to pass voting rights legislation, he said. “It has nothing to do with Biden’s interest in and willingness to fight for the Voting Rights Act.” Cleaver surmised that Biden “probably had more meetings with Sen. [Joe] Manchin” — the Democratic senator most prominently standing in the way of filibuster reform — “than he has with the first lady.”

Passing a smaller version of Biden’s Build Back Better plan would be a huge lift, said Cleaver. But selling what Democrats have already passed is equally imperative.

“I wish we could put up signs all over the country: ‘Pardon our progress, we’re rebuilding the nation,’” said Cleaver, referring to money going to states to fix crumbling bridges, waterways and broadband. “Most Democrats would like for the president to be out in the nation more, but hopefully, most Democrats like me, are also fully aware of the fact that we have a crisis in Eastern Europe.”

Ultimately, Democratic law-

# INTERNATIONAL

APRIL 20, 2022

Straight Truth

TEHRAN TIMES

## Ukraine says “Battle of Donbass” has started

From page 1 ► The United States on April 13 unveiled a \$800-million tranche of equipment for Ukraine, including helicopters, howitzers and armored personnel carriers.

“There have been four flights from the United States arriving into the theater just yesterday,” a senior Pentagon official says, with a fifth flight due shortly.

The package includes 18 155mm howitzers for the first time, as well as 40,000 artillery rounds, 200 M113 armored personnel carriers, 11 Mi-17 helicopters and 100 armored multi-purpose vehicles.

Last week, U.S. President Joe Biden announced an additional \$800 million in military assistance to Ukraine, expanding the aid to include heavy artillery ahead of a wider Russian assault expected in eastern Ukraine.

The U.S. military expects to start training Ukrainians on using howitzer artillery in coming days, a senior U.S. defense official says, adding the training would take place outside Ukraine.

Russia has formally complained to the U.S. over its military aid to Ukraine, warning of “unpredictable consequences” if shipments of advanced weaponry go forward.

Meanwhile, UN humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths has announced he will push for the creation of a “humanitarian contact group” involving Ukraine and Russia.

Such a group would “meet convened by the UN to discuss on a virtual or actual basis at any time to discuss humanitarian issues,” Griffiths told reporters in New York.

That could include ceasefire monitoring, safe passage, humanitarian corridors or other issues between the two warring sides, he said.

Humanitarian ceasefires between Ukrainian and Russian forces in Ukraine are not on the horizon right now, but may be possible in a couple of weeks, Griffiths added.

He noted that UN aid officials are planning to dispatch a humanitarian convoy in the next couple of days into the embattled eastern region of Donetsk and from there, send aid supplies into the Luhansk region.

Aid agencies have warned of the need to protect and evacuate civilians in the conflict.

Griffiths had visited Moscow in early April before a trip to Kyiv, to try to obtain a humanitarian ceasefire and facilitate other aid interventions.

Last week, however, Guterres admitted that a halt to the fighting seemed unlikely and warned that it was too easy for the two sides to “blame each other when it goes wrong.”

The official said he planned to visit Russia again after a trip to Turkey. Griffiths also said that keeping the port of Odessa open was of the “highest importance.”

Odessa is home to full grain silos storing Ukraine’s harvest, he said, calling it a “lifeline” to countries whose food supply has been impacted by the war.

On the diplomatic front, the Kremlin has accused Ukraine of constantly changing its stance when it comes to issues that have already been agreed at peace talks.

“Contacts continue at an expert level within



the framework of the negotiation process”. Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov told reporters on a conference call.

“Unfortunately the Ukrainian side is not consistent in terms of the points that have been agreed”, he said.

“It is often changing its position and the trend of the negotiating process leaves much to be desired.”

French President Emmanuel Macron said on Monday his dialogue with Putin had stalled.

Elsewhere, two British fighters captured in Ukraine by Russian forces have appeared on Russian state TV and asked to be exchanged for an ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin who is being held by the Ukrainian authorities.

The two captured Britons, Shaun Pinner and Aiden Aslin, spoke to the camera in footage that was broadcast on Russian state TV.

The men both asked British Prime Minister Boris Johnson to exchange them for pro-Russian Ukrainian politician Viktor Medvedchuk.

A video appeal by Medvedchuk, in which he asks to be exchanged, was released on Monday by Ukraine’s security service.

Medvedchuk is the leader of Ukraine’s Opposition Platform, For Life party and an ally of Putin, who has spent years advocating closer ties between Russia and Ukraine.

Both Pinner and Aslin had been fighting for the Ukrainian army in the southeastern Ukrainian city of Mariupol, which is now almost entirely under Russian control.

Russia sent its troops into Ukraine on February 24 in what it called “a special military operation.” Since then, the West has imposed sweeping sanctions on Russia since then.

Western capitals and Kyiv accuse Russia of an unprovoked aggression. Russia denies targeting civilians in what it described as a “special operation” in the face of NATO’s eastward expansion towards Russian borders.

Advocates have been calling on the West and the U.S. in particular to back the peace efforts to end the crisis. Critics accuse Washington of prolonging the war to benefit its own interests to contain Russian growing military and economic power.

The conflict began after Moscow spent months requesting security guarantees from NATO concerning its eastward expansion. The guarantees were not provided to Moscow.

However, the economic consequences of Western sanctions appear to have backfired on Western economies as well as having a dire effect on countries reliant on Ukrainian food supplies.

(Source: abcnews.go.com)

## France: EU fraud agency investigating candidate Le Pen

Paris prosecutors are studying a report by the EU fraud agency accusing French far-right presidential candidate Marine Le Pen of misusing public funds while serving in the European Parliament

Paris prosecutors are studying a report by the European Union’s fraud agency accusing French far-right presidential candidate Marine Le Pen and other members of her nationalist party of misusing public funds while serving in the European Parliament.

The report was disclosed by French investigative news site Mediapart just days before Le Pen faces incumbent Emmanuel Macron in a runoff election Sunday that could determine Europe’s future direction. Le Pen’s party National Rally seeks to diminish the EU’s powers.

Le Pen denied wrongdoing, dismissing the report as “foul play by the European Union a few days before the second round” of the election. Speaking Monday on a campaign stop in Normandy, she said, “I am well accustomed to this, and I think the French will absolutely not fall for it.”

A similar EU fraud investigation was disclosed ahead of the 2017 French presidential election, which Le Pen lost to Macron. Le Pen was handed preliminary charges by French investigators over that case, which is still ongoing.

Macron, a pro-EU centrist, leads Le Pen in polls ahead of Sunday’s vote, though the race is tighter than when they faced off in 2017.

EU fraud agency OLAF submitted its latest report last month to the Paris prosecutor’s office, which is “in the course of analyzing it,” the prosecutor’s office said Monday. No formal investigation has yet been opened,



and no further details were released.

According to Mediapart, the OLAF report found that Le Pen, her firebrand father and party founder Jean-Marie Le Pen and other party members who served in the European Parliament used 617,000 euros of public

money for “fictitious” reasons, notably for the benefit of companies close to the party. The fraud office is reportedly seeking reimbursement of the funds and potential fraud and embezzlement charges.

OLAF accused party members of “grave violations” and said the “inappropriate behavior” of members of National Rally — formerly called the National Front — “imperiled the reputation of the Union’s institutions,” according to Mediapart.

OLAF didn’t immediately respond to requests for comment Monday, a holiday in Belgium and several European countries.

It’s not the first time Le Pen has been accused of misusing EU funds. Among several legal affairs that have dogged her party, Le Pen was handed preliminary charges in 2018 based on a separate investigation by OLAF accusing members of her party of using aides on the European Parliament’s payroll for the party’s political activity. Other French political parties faced similar accusations.

Le Pen, who served in the European Parliament from 2004-2017, smiled for selfies as she met with hundreds of voters Monday in the Normandy town of Saint-Pierre-en-Auge. A small group of Macron supporters came with posters to urge voters to prevent the far-right from running France.

She and Macron face a crucial debate on Wednesday.



## Mashhad getting well-prepared to host pilgrims on Eid al-Fitr



TEHRAN – The holy city of Mashhad is getting well-prepared to host millions of pilgrims on Eid al-Fitr, a joyful holiday when Muslims celebrate 29 or 30 days of dawn-to-sunset fasting.

“According to forecasts, we will have the presence of millions of pilgrims in the holy city of Mashhad during the (two-day) Eid al-Fitr holidays this year, so we must be fully prepared to host travelers,” MEHR quoted a local official as saying on Tuesday.

“All service sectors including accommodation, transportation, road services, and health services must be fully prepared,” the official added.

Normally, Mashhad’s holy shrine of Imam Reza (AS) where the eighth Shia Imam is laid to rest, is visited by an average number of 500,000 pilgrims each day, according to Astan Quds Razavi which manages the shrine complex and other associated institutions.

That spiritual tradition of pilgrimage along with sustained efforts to safeguard hospitality services for Razavi pilgrims may join UNESCO’s listing of cultural treasures as Iran has asked the United Nations cultural agency to recognize the concept of ‘Good safeguarding practices to improve hospitality services for Razavi Pilgrims’.

Moreover, the architectural design of the complex has also complied with these traditions and rituals to address the needs of people and the urban landscape.

Historical data suggests that the complex has been developed in different stages of time according to the needs of the people and rituals associated with the holy shrine, yet the structure, design concepts, forms, material, tangible and intangible aspects, morphology, entering circumstances, praying rites and the spirit of the complex retained its authenticity and integrity the whole time and with legal and religious support of authorities and people.

This year’s Ramadan began on April 03, which falls in the spring season in Iran and it is estimated to end on May 2. Because of the nature of the lunar calendar system, the dates of Ramadan vary each year and there is always a sort of disagreement among scholars as to when Ramadan precisely start or come to an end.

By tradition, the new moon crescent which is sighted by the naked eye marks the beginning of a new lunar month but these days Muslims prefer to lean towards astronomical calculations to avoid such confusion.

## 3m relics freezing at National Museum treasure vault

From page 1 ► Chock-full of priceless objects showcasing the juicy history of the nation, the National Museum showcases ceramics, pottery, stone figures, and carvings, mostly taken from excavations at Persepolis, Ismail Abad (near Qazvin), Shush, Rey, and Turang Tappeh to name a few.

The main building of the National Museum, designed by French architect André Godard and completed in 1928, is one of the more attractive modern buildings in Tehran, blending Sassanian principles such as the grand iwan-style entrance with art deco-style brickwork.

Inside, among the finds from Shush, there’s a stone capital of a winged lion, some



delightful pitchers and vessels in animal shapes, and colorful glazed bricks decorated with double-winged mythical creatures. A copy of the diorite stele detailing the Babylonian Code of Hammurabi, found at Shush in 1901, is also displayed – the original being in Paris.

# Why Trans-Iranian Railway is a glittering engineering feat of the 20th century?

TEHRAN – The 1,394-kilometre-long Trans-Iranian railway was completed in 1938 after 11 years of massively challenging construction as it crosses four distinct climates, linking the glittering shores of the Caspian Sea to the fertile plains of the Persian Gulf.

Moreover, the railway joins together a striking tapestry of landscapes from soaring mountain ranges, deep gorges, salt deserts, old-growth forests, and plains. That was why experts from around the globe were presented with a technical challenge since the proposed route would cross four distinct climates.

More amazingly, chains of lengthy slopes take the single-track railway high into the mountains on either side of Tehran, which itself sits on a high plateau.

On July 25, 2021, the massive railway network was one of 33 new sites awarded World Heritage status by UNESCO, joining world eminent locations such as Venice, Machu Picchu in Peru, Yellowstone National Park in the U.S., and Ecuador’s Galapagos Islands.

As mentioned by the UN cultural body, the railway is notable for its scale and the engineering works it required to overcome steep routes and other difficulties. Unlike most early railway projects, the construction of the Trans-Iranian Railway was funded by national taxes to avoid foreign investment and control.

According to a CNN article, the construction of the costly north-south railway was estimated at around \$39 million at the time of completion (more than \$2.7 billion in today’s figures).

Some 224 tunnels of more than 76



kilometers in length; 174 viaducts and 186 smaller bridges were constructed between 1927 and 1938 to carry the railway across deep ravines and river valleys as it climbs to two 2,134-meter summits, a feat made possible by more than 70,000 workers, extensive mapping, and aerial photography.

Day-to-day difficulties for its construction included a lack of freshwater for mixing good quality mortar and concrete and keeping workers and train crews hydrated.

Furthermore, some tunnels had to be abandoned during construction after salt and gypsum deposits were found, forcing new routes to be located, while another tunnel through volcanic rocks could be neither blasted nor dug out with picks and shovels.

Heat, dust, altitude, and a shortage of

water for steam locomotive boilers -- and their crews -- made the railway a very harsh environment. But by 1944 capacity was up to 6,489 tons per day, thanks to diesel locomotives and thousands of extra freight cars.

The railway -- which carries both freight and passenger trains -- runs roughly northeast from Bandar-e Iman Khomeyni via Ahvaz, Qom, and Tehran to Bandar Torkaman.

When it comes to tourism, highlights for those able to experience it include the Se Khat Tala (Three Golden Lines) spiral, where the line can be seen at three different heights thanks to loops and tunnels that help it to gain height, and the spectacular Veresk Bridge in the Alborz mountains.

Constructed in 1934/35 by an Italian contractor, the latter soars 110 meters above the valley floor on a 66-meter masonry arch.

Narratives say that to assuage fears that the slender structure would not be able to handle the weight of the trains, its Italian chief engineer and his family were instructed to stand underneath for the passage of the first train.

The rail network can be regarded as a turning point for comprehensive developments in Iran. Those developments include a wide spectrum of various economical, commercial, social, cultural, and even political aspects in a sensitive and important period of contemporary world history.

For those able to experience it, now or in the future, this far-fetched railway offers an unforgettable journey across a country that is still unknown to many and is often misunderstood.

## Qatar World Cup should alter Iran tourism, expert says

TEHRAN – The Qatar World Cup should be a turning point in Iran’s tourism industry, the Head of the Iranian Tour Operators has said.

“By attracting World Cup spectators to Iran, the Iranian tourism industry could secure a brighter future,” ILNA quoted Ebrahim Pourfaraj as saying on Tuesday.

Yet, it is necessary to determine whether the necessary infrastructure is available, from visa issuance to accommodations and hospitality, the expert added.

While the government has decided to offer free visas for the World Cup spectators, it is still imperative that the country prepares for the possibility of a large number of tourists during the tournament and it must ensure that the infrastructure for the issuance of visas is in place so that the process will be as easy as possible, he explained.

There is also a need for the Iranian southern islands of Kish and Qeshm to re-affirm their accommodation centers’ capacity to receive foreign travelers, he noted.

In addition to being a busy season for foreign tourists, autumn is also a popular time for domestic tourists to visit

Kish and Qeshm, he explained.

Although Kish can receive a large number of passengers, it must notify tour operators and announce its readiness before the World Cup spectators arrive, he mentioned.

He also noted that the World Cup spectators are young and energetic, so their travel plans and needs are different from those of usual foreign tourists visiting Iran, who are in their 50s or so. This way, they require special travel packages.

Earlier this month, Iranian media reported that the government mulls over a visa simplification procedure at the suggestion of its Foreign Ministry to draw spectators from the neighboring Qatar which plays host to the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 in November and December.

The Iranian government has been required to grant a free visa to citizens whose national football teams qualify for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar for a one-time or a two-time period with a validity period of two months and a 30-day stay.

Additionally, nationals of all countries (except those from Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Somalia, Sri Lanka) who are subject to tourist visa requirements



as well as all nationals of the U.S., UK, and Canada can apply for a free visa once, twice or multiple times if they provide a ticket from Doha.

Free visas can encourage World Cup spectators to visit Iran during the event, some experts say.

Back in February, Iranian tourism minister Ezzatollah Zarghami said that Iran must take an immense opportunity to be provided by the upcoming Qatar World Cup to properly introduce the county to the international spectators of the major event.

“A significant number of travelers, mostly young people, would arrive in Qatar to attend the World Cup... It provides an exceptional opportunity for us to properly introduce tourist attractions of the country,” he added.

“Over the past months, we

have prepared some plans to arrack attendees to the upcoming 2022 FIFA World Cup soccer championship.”

The minister said many people are interested to visit Iran for its historical attractions and ecotourism to name a few.

Furthermore, Zarghami’s deputy for tourism, Ali-Asghar Shalbafian, has said the landmark event gives Iran a chance to dwindle the so-called anti-Iranian sentiments known as Iranophobia. “Qatar’s World Cup offers a unique opportunity to introduce destinations near the host country, and we should take advantage of this opportunity to confront Iranophobia.”

To make good use of this occasion, it is necessary to develop consensus among the relevant agencies, and if this does not occur, it will be detrimental to the country, Shalbafian explained.

The Islamic Republic expects to reap a bonanza from its numerous tourist spots such as bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, mausoleums, churches, towers, and mansions, of which 26 are inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

# Not a tourist hub but home to eight UNESCO sites!

TEHRAN – Kerman is still absent from the maps of many domestic sightseers; a matter that puts travel experts at odds while the southern Iranian province is home to eight World Heritage sites.

According to the available data, visits by Noruz trippers to the southern province grow by about 39 percent and overnight stays rise 27 percent throughout the Iranian new year holidays (started March 21) compared to the same period three years earlier.

However, experts in the field of tourism believe these figures are insignificant and not comparable to the province’s tourism capacity, despite its existing tourism infrastructure, IRNA reported on Tuesday.

“Most tourists do not choose Kerman as a tourist destination, but only use it to cross to and from other provinces.”

They believe the most significant problem is not presenting properly the province’s tourism capabilities to the target community.

If the province’s cultural heritage and tourism assets are properly identified and promoted to the people, the number of tourists and accommodations will increase in the coming years.

Over the past few years, Kerman’s infrastructure for tourism has improved significantly, but is more important to focus on the issue of attracting tourists during this time, experts say.

“Strategies such as introducing attractions, extensive and targeted marketing, as well as creating side attractions for tourists should be implemented.”

Last August, the provincial tourism



chief Fereydoun Fa’ali lamented that despite being home to seven UNESCO World Heritage sites, Kerman province is not still a giant tourist destination.

“Extra efforts need to be made to promote the vast southern province of Kerman as a tourist destination for domestic travelers and foreign tourists,” he said.

Despite its world-famous attractions, diverse and inviting climates, and conditions, this province is not as popular as it should be, the official added.

“It is important that governmental and private sectors participate in making Kerman a new destination and market for tourism, given its seven World Heritage sites and various capacities including UNESCO-tagged Bam Citadel.”

Moreover, tourism infrastructure throughout the province needs to be upgraded, he concluded.

The UNESCO-tagged Bam and its Cultural Landscape is located on the southern edge of the Iranian high plateau, in Kerman province, close to the Pakistan border. It’s highly regarded as an outstanding example of an ancient fortified settlement.

According to UNESCO, the origins of the citadel can be traced back to the Achaemenid period (6th to 4th centuries BC) and even beyond. The ensemble was at the crossroads of important trade routes as well in its heyday sometime between the 7th to 11th centuries. The massive fortress and its environs were almost completely brought down to earth due to a devastating earthquake on December 26, 2003.

The big and sprawling Kerman province has been a cultural melting pot since antiquity, blending Persians with subcontinental tribe dwellers. It is home to myriad historical sites and scenic landscapes such as Bazaar-e Sartasari, Jabalieh Dome, Ganjali Khan Bathhouse, Malek Jameh Mosque, and Shahdad Desert to name a few.



# Four projects run to develop stem cell knowledge

TEHRAN – The Vice Presidency for Science and Technology has implemented four important projects in order to strengthen the country's scientific citation in the field of stem cells.

One of the keys to the development is to provide strategic infrastructure in important fields. Smart knowledge-based platforms promote the scientific citation of the country and accelerate the formation of the scientific ecosystem.

The support of university technology development projects took place in a purposeful interaction between the Vice Presidency and the large universities.

Another measure taken in this area was supporting the development of the National Network of Animal Modeling and In-Vivo Research. This support has brought significant achievements including technologies for reproduction, keeping, and breeding of laboratory animals, the development of research and translation of knowledge and technology, and the development of technologies and laboratory services for in-vivo studies.

Another important step of the Council for Development of Stem Cell Sciences and Technologies last year was the establishment of a gene production center for the Royan Research Institute.



During this process, two gene therapy projects became operational.

The launch of autophagy and regenerative medicine is also one of the plans supported by the Council last year. In this program, the management of the autophagy process in order to prevent tissue damage is recognized as a functional indicator of this plan.

Stem cells are the “parent” cells from which all other blood cells develop. These are mainly red blood cells, platelets, and white blood cells. Bone marrow, the factory that produces stem cells, is the soft tissue inside bones like the breastbone or hip bone.

Stem cells are found in the

brain, blood vessels, skeletal muscles, skin, the liver, bone marrow, peripheral (circulating) blood, and the umbilical cord blood of newborn babies.

Usually, very severe illnesses like leukemia, other cancers, and hereditary diseases are treated by marrow transplant.

Currently, over 7,000 knowledge-based companies are active in the fields of aircraft maintenance, steel, nanotech, biotech, pharmaceuticals, medical equipment, oil, and gas are among the sectors that researchers in technology companies have engaged in.

The number of knowledge-based companies active in the field of stem cells and re-

generative medicine increased to 160 with the improvement of the rules and incentive policies.

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Technology and Innovation Report 2021 has placed Iran among upper-middle countries in terms of readiness for frontier technologies.

The index yielded results for 158 countries with the United States, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom receiving the highest scores on a scale of 0 to 1. Based on their rankings, countries are placed within one of four 25-percentile score groups: low, lower-middle, upper-middle, and high values of the index.

The report has put Iran in the 71st position with a total score of 0.46, higher than Qatar, Oman, and Morocco.

Iran was also placed 82 in ICT, 74 in skills, 37 in R&D, 130 in industry, and 53 in finance sectors.

Only a few countries currently create frontier technologies, but all countries need to prepare for them. To assess national capabilities to equitably use, adopt and adapt these technologies this report has developed a ‘readiness index’. The index comprises five building blocks: ICT deployment, skills, R&D activity, industry activity, and access to finance.

## WHO holds workshop in Iran on risk communication

From page 1 ► An RCCE mechanism in place provides the policy and structural framework for systematizing and institutionalizing RCCE in the country. The RCCE strategy envisions building a structure for RCCE across all the tiers of governance, including at national and provincial levels and in towns and districts across the Islamic Republic of Iran that could be applicable in the case of the COVID-19 epidemic and other potential crises.

The mission also provided opportunities for experts from WHO and the Ministry to discuss ongoing efforts in emergency preparedness and existing challenges, as well as gaps, and brought together United Nations agencies operating in the country in brainstorming sessions to build a unified cluster for cross-sectoral collaboration in RCCE.



The mission concluded with a briefing session by Aynsley for health officials at the Ministry of Health and Medical Education on the mission's takeaways and recommendations as shared in meetings, networking sessions, and training.

## Amphibians and Reptiles from Iran

Part 2

The little-known mountain newts of the genus *Neurergus* occur only in western Iran, northeastern Iraq, and southern Turkey. They have distinctive yellow or orange-red spots or stripes on a dark brown ground color and a compressed tail; the similarly colored fire salamanders have a tail that lacks a fin or crest and is oval in cross-section.

The Azerbaijan mountain newt, *Neurergus crocatus*, lives in the mountains west of Lake Urmia and in northern Kurdistan, in both Iran and Iraq. Its mountain stream habitat is in the remnant deciduous forest areas at elevations of 500 to 1,700 m and water temperatures from 10 to 13°C.

The Kurdistan mountain newt, *Neurergus microscopilotus*, is known only along the Iran-Iraq border near Pava and at Avroman Dag, Iraq; the habitat is similar to that of the Azerbaijan mountain newt and lies between 1,300 and 1,400 m elevation.

The Lorestan mountain newt, *Neurergus kaiseri*, is known only from the vicinity of Shahbazan, at elevations of 500 to 1,300 m; its habitat is in and around small

brooks and springs in the sparsely vegetated oak zone of the western foothills of the Zagros mountains.

Almost nothing is known about the ecology and natural history of the mountain newts; the morphology of the larvae suggests that they grow up in calm pools.

Newts of the genus *Triturus* occur primarily in Europe, although two species extend into Asia; *Triturus cristatus karelini*, the southern crested newt, represents the genus in northern Iran. This newt can be distinguished from the other Iranian salamanders by its brownish to greenish coloration. Its habitat is often within deciduous forest or areas formerly forested, where there are ponds or weedy pools.

Apparently has a considerable elevation range, from lowlands near sea level to hilly and mountainous terrain over 2,100 m. Little is known of its habits or ecology in Iran. This subspecies occurs from the eastern Balkan Peninsula through the Crimea, Turkey, and the Caucasus to northwestern Iran.

Source: Encyclopedia Iranica  
To be continued

## Earthquakes rattle Iran 8,630 times in a year

TEHRAN – A total of 8,630 earthquakes have been recorded across the country over the past calendar year, which ended on March 20, according to the Seismological networks of the Institute of Geophysics of the University of Tehran.

Of the total quakes, 167 were more than 4 on the Richter scale, the largest of which occurred on November 14, 2021, with a magnitude of 6.3 in southern Hormozgan province.

Statistically, at least one earthquake with a magnitude of more than 5 has occurred monthly in the country.

The northeastern province of Khorasan Razavi, the southeastern province of Kerman, and the central province of Isfahan registered the most earthquakes, while the northern province of Alborz, the southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan, and the northwestern province of Zanjan recorded

the least earthquakes.

The Iranian plateau is located in a very seismically active region of the world and is known not only for its major catastrophic earthquakes but also for the disasters relating to natural hazards, especially earthquakes.

About 2 percent of the earthquakes of the world occur in Iran but more than 6% of the victims of the world earthquakes during the 20th century are reported from Iranian earthquakes. This shows the high level of vulnerability in Iran, according to Mehdi Zare, a professor of engineering seismology.

Tehran is also one of the most hazardous metropolises in the world in terms of the risk of different natural disasters, such as earthquakes, floods, subsidence, drought, landslide, fire following an earthquake, etc.

## COVID-19 UPDATES ON APRIL 19

|                                |             |
|--------------------------------|-------------|
| New cases                      | 2,820       |
| New deaths                     | 23          |
| Total cases                    | 7,210,788   |
| Total deaths                   | 140,877     |
| New hospitalized patients      | 246         |
| Patients in critical condition | 1,264       |
| Total recovered patients       | 6,952,007   |
| Diagnostic tests conducted     | 50,543,394  |
| Doses of vaccine injected      | 148,442,034 |

## Tehran, Damascus seek to expand co-op in health sector

TEHRAN – The Iranian deputy health minister, Mohammad Hossein Niknam, and the Syrian ambassador to Tehran, Shafiq Dayoub, discussed ways to expand cooperation between the two countries in the field of health.

During a meeting on Tuesday in Tehran, Niknam said that Iran is ready to hold training courses in the field of start-ups, empowerment of Syrian youth in the field of business development and knowledge-based institutions, design, and establishment of innovation centers, science and technology parks.

Enumerating the problems facing pharmaceutical and medical equipment companies in exporting drugs and medical equipment, he said that holding a virtual meeting between the officials of the Ministry of Health and the companies exporting Iranian medicine to Syria in the presence of the Syrian ambassador can help solve the problems.

Dayoub also for his part expressed hope that the relations between the two countries will increase, especially in the field of health, and the existing problems will eliminate.

Syria has suffered a lot in the field of health, treatment, and academia in the fight against terrorism and needs to cooperate with the Islamic Republic to compensate for the losses, he emphasized.

The expansion of export programs by the Nanotechnology Innovation Council in recent years has led to the entry of Iranian goods, equipment, and services into global markets.

However, in recent years, due to curren-



cy fluctuations and export barriers related to sanctions, Iran's exports of nano-products to other countries have decreased.

According to the Nanotechnology Innovation Council, the three countries of Iraq, Turkey, and Afghanistan are the most important export destinations for Iranian nano products.

Iran has created centers in six Asian countries, namely China, India, Indonesia, Syria, Turkey, and Iraq, for exporting nanotechnology products.

Iran has created centers in six Asian countries, namely China, India, Indonesia, Syria, Turkey, and Iraq, for exporting nanotechnology products.

### Health tech development

Based on innovative indicators of health technology development in 2021, Iran was ranked 60th among 132 countries, which shows an improvement of 60 steps compared to 2014, the deputy health minister for research and technology, has announced.

A total of 1,670 knowledge-based firms are operating in the health sector, ISNA quoted Younes Panahi as saying on Thursday.

He added that there are 13 science and technology parks and 95 technology growth centers in the field of health, while 343 technological products have so far been licensed, and 335 inventions in medical sciences have been patented.

The health technology development is evaluated by the Global Innovation Index with seven indicators, including institutional structure, human capital and research, infrastructure, market and business complexity, technological knowledge, and creativity, he explained.

Indicators of innovation in higher education, graduation, access to information and communication technology, indigenous infrastructure, gross capital formation, production of knowledge and inventions, scientific and citational articles, gross domestic product, and national industrial projects, are Iran's strengths in the 2021 evaluation.

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

## Over 950 earthquakes rattle Iran in a month

TEHRAN– Seismological networks of the Institute of Geophysics of the University of Tehran, recorded more than 950 earthquakes across the country over the past calendar month Ordibehesht (April 21-May 21).

Two earthquakes of more than 4 on the Richter scale have been recorded in the country by the National Seismological Center, the largest of which occurred on May 17, with a magnitude of 5.5 near Sankhast in northeastern North Khorasan province, which left 25 injured.

Statistically, 883 earthquakes with magnitudes smaller than 3, and 64 earthquakes with magnitudes between 3 and 4, also, 8 quakes with magnitudes 4-5 have occurred.

Also, 3 earthquakes with magnitudes 5-6 shook the country.

### ثبت بیش از ۹۵۰ زمین‌لرزه در اردیبهشت‌ماه

شبکه‌های لرزه‌نگاری مرکز لرزه‌نگاری کشوری وابسته به موسسه ژئوفیزیک دانشگاه تهران در اردیبهشت‌ماه ۱۴۰۰ تعداد ۹۵۸ زمین‌لرزه را ثبت کردند. این زمین‌لرزه‌ها در نواحی مختلف ایران و نواحی مرزی رخ داده و توسط شبکه‌های لرزه‌نگاری ثبت و تعیین محل شده‌اند. در اردیبهشت‌ماه ۱۴۰۰ تعداد ۱۱ زمین‌لرزه با بزرگی بیش از ۴.۰ در داخل کشور توسط مرکز لرزه‌نگاری کشوری به ثبت رسیده است که بزرگ‌ترین آن‌ها در تاریخ ۱۴۰۰/۰۲/۲۷ با بزرگی ۵/۵ حوالی سنخواست واقع در استان خراسان شمالی، رخ داده‌است.

از لحاظ آماری ۸۸۳ زمین‌لرزه با بزرگی کوچکتر ۳، تعداد ۶۴ زمین‌لرزه با بزرگی بین ۳ و ۴، تعداد ۸ زمین‌لرزه با بزرگی بین ۴ و ۵ و تعداد ۳ زمین‌لرزه با بزرگی بین ۵ و ۶ بوده‌است.



